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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000901

SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES/SAT, EUR/WE, EUR/RPE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TSPA](#) [PREL](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH PRESIDENT CHIRAC PLEASED WITH U.S.-
EUROPEAN SPACE COOPERATION

1. (U) Summary: On February 9, 2005, the USEP Space Attache/NASA European Representative (NER) joined a European Space Agency (ESA) delegation to brief French President Jacques Chirac on the successful deployment of the European Huygens probe on the surface of the Saturn moon, Titan. Chirac warmly received the delegation and thanked NASA for its contributions to the mission. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) On February 9, 2005, the USEP Space Attache/NASA European Representative (NER) joined a European Space Agency (ESA) delegation which met with French President Jacques Chirac at the Elysee Palace. Chirac requested a briefing on the successful deployment of the ESA Huygens probe on the surface of Saturn's moon, Titan. The delegation was headed by Jean-Jacques Dordain, Director General, ESA, and included: David Southwood, Director, Science Program, ESA; Jean-Pierre Lebreton, Mission Scientist; Pascale Sourisse, President and CEO, Alcatel Space; Daniel Gautier, Head of Research, Center for Scientific Research, Astronomer, Observatory of Paris-Meudon, developer of the Huygens Mission; Roger-Maurice Bonnet, former Head of the Science Program, ESA, President of COSPAR; Marcello Fulchignoni, Paris-Meudon Observatory; Guy Israel, Atmospheric Research; and, Francois Raulin, University of Paris. Francois d'Aubert, Minister of Research, joined the meeting.

3. (U) The Cassini-Huygens mission to Saturn is a cooperation between NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Italian Space Agency. The Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), designed, developed and assembled the Cassini orbiter. Cassini was launched October 15, 1997, on a Titan 4 rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida. Cassini entered Saturn orbit July 1, 2004, and the Huygens probe, developed by ESA, was successfully deployed on the surface of Titan on January 14, 2005.

4. (U) Chirac was gracious, interested, and engaged; he stayed with the delegation and listened attentively for an hour and a half. Dordain, speaking on behalf of the delegation, described in broad terms the mission and its significance for Europe and European space. He was generous and straightforward in his praise for the cooperation with NASA, thanking the U.S. for the ride to Saturn and the ensuing tracking support during the Huygens probe descent.

5. (U) Chirac evidenced keen interest, and inquired of both Dordain and NER if it was correct to say that the mission was truly a successful joint international endeavor. All concurred. Members of the del were unanimous in their praise for the support provided by NASA, and cited the Cassini-Huygens cooperation as an example for the future. ESA ended the presentation with a chart that encouraged "exploration together," and emphasized the importance of international cooperation for future space exploration initiatives.

6. (U) Dordain concluded by noting that President Bush had set forth "The Vision for U.S. Space Exploration" and that ESA was already engaged in exploration of the solar system, pointing to Rosetta, Mars Express, and Huygens, as examples. Chirac did not appear to be familiar with the details of the President's Vision, but listened with interest as the broad outlines of The Vision were explained.

7. (U) In conclusion, Chirac thanked the del for taking time from their important work to brief him. In his follow-up remarks to the press, Chirac noted the importance of the Huygens success for Europe's space endeavors, expressed his hope that this and similar successes in space would

help to stimulate interest among young people in Europe for science and engineering careers, and highlighted the importance of international cooperation in space exploration.

18. (U) In a personal aside to NER, Chirac expressed his pleasure for the successful international space cooperation, and thanked NASA for its efforts on behalf of international cooperation and understanding. NER presented Chirac with a NASA pin emblematic of continuing cooperation in space.
Leach